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# Where I Stand — And Why

by Emil Herman

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*Emil Herman, author of the following, was released from Federal penitentiary on McNeil's Island, Washington, on December 24 [1921], in the same batch of "Christmas pardons" of politicals that included Eugene Victor Debs, after nearly 4 years in jail. Herman, one of the most active of the Socialists in the Northwest, was sentenced to 10 years in jail after a trial that was denounced as a legal lynching. He was State Secretary of the Socialist Party of Washington, having been elected in 1916.*

*Although it was generally believed by many Socialists that he would join the Communists upon his release from prison, the Socialist Party, through its national organization and through all its publicity work for amnesty, made the Herman case one of the most important of those of the political prisoners for whom the party was working. In this letter Herman tells why he finds it essential to cast his lot with the Socialist Party organization. [—Joseph W. Sharts]*

While a prisoner at McNeil's Island penitentiary, the censorship of the Department of Justice in vogue at that institution prevented me from keeping myself fully informed regarding the progress and activities of the various parties and groups into which the Socialist movement had divided; so the natural and logical thing for me to do was to remain neutral until I should have an opportunity to investigate, analyze, and decide where to affiliate.

This is how it happens that I was unaffiliated with any of the organizations claiming to repre-

sent the interests and the revolutionary aspirations and ideals of the working class of the United States when I was released from prison on December 24, last, after having served 3 years, 4 and 1/2 months of the 10 year sentence imposed upon me under the Espionage Act.

## **Charges Spies Were at Work.**

Since my return from prison I have made a careful survey of the labor movement and of the different political and economic groups into which it is divided and have arrived at the following conclusions:

1. It is apparent to me that the programs of the Communist Labor and the Communist Parties which resulted from the ill-advised Left Wing split from the Socialist Party were in great part written by agents of the Department of Justice and that this was true to a still greater extent of the program of the United Communist Party, which was a fusion of the two first-mentioned organizations. They swallowed hook, bait, and line of the programs imposed upon them, and having adopted the illegal programs, were, of course, driven underground. Since then the rank and file of the United Communist Party (who, without doubt, have at all times been honest in their intentions) have joined with a few other groups to organize the Workers Party and have adopted a program which is open, above board, and legal, and in no important respect different from that

of the Socialist Party, of which they were formerly members, except that it recognizes the Third International, while the Socialist Party has (to my mind) taken the correct and consistent position of remaining unaffiliated until such time as the program of one of the several Internationals is so modified as to make it practical for a revolutionary political organization in the United States to become a unit thereof.

2. Thus, the Left Wing offshoot from the Socialist Party, having made the illegal and ill-fated underground attempt to organize the workers for revolutionary activity through the United Communist Party now recognize their mistake, return above ground in the Workers Party, and find themselves advocating practically the same program which they formerly advocated through the Socialist Party and which the Socialist Party still advocates.

### **Can't Be a Quitter Now.**

3. The platform of the Farmer-Labor Party, wherein it is vital and of importance to farmers and working people, is merely a repetition of Socialist Party principles. The Farmer-Labor Party, composed largely of former members of the Socialist Party, would probably never have been organized had not many Socialists who left the Socialist Party in disgust because of the incompetent handling of party affairs which developed into the Left Wing fiasco, wanted a political party through which to express themselves during the campaign of 1920. The party, like the Workers Party and several other labor groups, has signified

its willingness to unite with the Socialist Party in the formation of a federated labor party for the purpose of united political action by the working class and those in sympathy with their plans.

4. The Socialist Labor Party, while its aim is the same as that of the Socialist Party, i.e., the emancipation of labor and the establishment of the cooperative commonwealth, will probably continue (though I hope not) in its well-known attitude of refusing to join in any effort to form a federated labor party and as a result will continue its separate existence as a small, critical, and comparatively ineffective group.

Having taken an active (and I hope important) part in the Socialist movement for over 25 years, it is impossible for me to be a quitter in this time of crimes and imminent change. I feel that I must affiliate with that political party which most nearly conforms to my conception of what a political party of labor ought to be and which is making a serious effort to unite all revolutionary and progressive forces into one organization for the purpose of making common cause against the forces of reaction and oppression who are mercilessly exploiting the working people of our country.

After careful consideration I have concluded that the party is the Socialist Party and have decided to join Local Seattle at their next meeting. I will again give the best service of which I am capable, and be permitted to give, to build up a powerful political party with which we will march forward to victory and the cooperative commonwealth.

*Edited by Tim Davenport.*

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